

THE
Remarkable LIFE
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JRIEL ACOSTA, K

An eminent FREETHINKER;

With his REASONS for rejecting
all REVEALED RELIGION.

To which is added,

Mr. LIMBORCH's Defence of Chri-
stianity, in Answer to ACOSTA's
Objections:

With an INTRODUCTION; containing,
MEMOIRS of Mr. LIMBORCH's Life,
and an Account of his Writings.

L O N D O N,

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THE
EDITOR'S
PREFACE.

THE unfortunate Man, whose Life and Principles are described by himself in the following Sheets, being shocked at the many Absurdities in Popery, as well as modern Judaism, too hastily concluded all Religion to be Fraud and Invention ; and without having Patience to consider, or Learning to examine what had been wrote in Defence of the purer Part of it, professed by Protestants, took for granted that which he ought to have made the Subject of the strictest Enquiry, namely, That all other Sects were equally absurd in their Principles and Practices with those he was so unhappy as to fall into. By what appears of his natural Temper and Abilities (in all likelihood) he

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would have escaped the gross Errors he too rashly imbibed, had he been bred up in, or been acquainted with the Divines of the Protestant Church, whose rational Arguments and kind Usage would have prevented his utter Disregard to all Religion, and those terrible Consequences that followed it; which seemed to be occasioned more by his Resentment of the cruel Treatment he met with from the Professors of Religion, both *Popish* and *Jewish*, than by any Dislike to the Doctrines themselves, or Weakness in the Proofs of Religion.

This curious Tract (which deserved much sooner to appear, in *English*) was first published in *Latin* by that learned Divine *Philip Limborch*, and annexed to his *Friendly Conference with a learned Jew concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion*; printed at *Gouda* 1687, in Quarto: With whom it was held, and the Reason of it, will be seen in the short Account of Mr. *Limborch*'s Life here annexed as a proper Introduction to the following Piece, which it is hoped may prove useful to Christianity at this Juncture, as well as entertaining to the Readers, whereby the Editor's Desire and Design will be fully answered. As to the Translation, it has endeavoured thereby faithfully to represent the Sense of the Author, and where our Language would admit, his very Words: If any Inaccuracies of Style are found, the Reader is beg'd to excuse them, the sole Aim being Perspicuity.

Philip

Philip Limborch a learned Remonstrant was born at *Amsterdam*, June 19, 1633. His Father *Francis Limborch* was an Advocate, and his Mother Neice to the famous *Simon Episcopius*. After he had gone through a Course of Studies at *Amsterdam* under *Ger. Vossius* and *Steph. Curcellæus*, he went to *Utrecht* and heard *Gisbert Voet*'s Lectures in Divinity. He returned to *Amsterdam* about May 1654, and in October following preached his Probation Sermon. In August 1655, he was admitted to preach in publick, which he did first at *Haerlem*. In the same Year he was invited to *Alcmar* to be their Minister, but declined it to continue his Studies, and to prepare a greater Store of Sermons than he was then Master of. He was chose Minister at *Gouda* in 1657, and discharged that Office with great Success. He married August 15, 1660, *Elizabeth*, Daughter of *Nicholas Vanzorgen* an eminent Lawyer; she died in a few Years, and he had only one Daughter by her, who died an Infant. In 1667 he left *Gouda* to be Pastor at *Amsterdam*, and the Year following had the Professorship of Divinity conferred on him: In which he acquitted himself with great Reputation till his Death. He married to his second Wife, Jan. 9, 1674, *Cornelia Vankirk* a Widow, by whom he had two Children. In Autumn 1711, he began to be afflicted with St. *Anthony's Fire*, which at first did not seem dangerous, but by degrees weakened him so, that he was obliged

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to keep his Bed, and at last died of it, April 30, 1712, in the 79th Year of his Age.

Mr. Limborch had an admirable Genius and and retentive Memory. Though he never made Languages peculiarly his Study, yet he had attained a great Proficiency in them, and was capable of excelling in this Part of Literature, if he had not preferred that which was more important. He had a Taste for Mathematicks, and with Application would have been very skilfull in those Studies, as we may judge from his being a compleat Master of *Arithmetick* in all its Branches. The History of his own Country was so familiar to him, especially for the last Century, that the most minute Incidents were exactly remembered by him. He was grave without Moroseness, courteous without Diffimulation, cheerful and facetious without Levity. By these Qualities he rendered himself agreeable to all who conversed with him. He had all Qualifications suitable to the Character of a Divine, among which the Love of Truth was most predominant: Truth he diligently searched after by reading the Scriptures, and best Commentators, and when discovered never swerved from it. His Sermons were not full of false and affected, but true and genuine Eloquence, rational, solid, and edifying. He had so fully considered that important Point, the Freedom of human Actions, that he has clearly explained that difficult Subject in his

Letters

Letters to Mr. *Locke*, of which Point even that great Philosopher had not so exact an Idea. To an open Sincerity he had joined so much Humanity, that no one could take Offence at his Behaviour or Conversation. A Strength of Memory which retained whatever he had studied, contributed very much to the Perspicuity and Justness of his Instructions to his Pupils. And though a long Course of Teaching, joined to his advanced Age, had created a Reverence towards him, and an Authority over all about him; yet he was never displeased with others for differing from him in Opinion; but as he would endeavour to defend his own Sentiments, he would hear them opposed with equal Candour and Moderation. Herein an admirable Pattern for learned Men, who are too often impatient of Contradiction, not considering that others have as much right to examine and oppose their Opinions, as they to publish and defend them. Towards his Pupils he kept the just Medium between Severity, and too great Indulgence. In a Word he lived with a perfect Temperance and Command of his Passions, such as became a Christian and a Divine; by which means he preserved the Health of his Body, and Vigour of his Mind to a good old Age, and died firmly persuaded of the Truth of Christianity, which he had so clearly and successfully defended, and in a full Belief of the Performance of those Promises the Gospel has made in a future State.

The

6 *The Editor's PREFACE.*

The most considerable of his Works are 1. *Theologia Christiana*, &c. or a compleat System of Divinity, first published in Quarto 1686, since that, enlarged and printed four times in Folio, the last in 1730. It was translated into English in 2 Vol. 8vo. 2. *De Veritate Religionis Chr. amica Collatio*, &c. in Quarto 1687. At the End of which is that Tract we here present the Reader with a Translation of. The Occasion of the Book was this: *Isaac Orobio*, a learned Jew, who came from Seville, and practised Physick at Amsterdam, had escaped out of the Inquisition in Spain by pretending to be a Catholick; and happening to fall into a Discourse about Religion with *Egbert Veene* a celebrated Physician, and Friend of *Limborch*'s, who much commended *Limborch*'s Learning, *Orobio* desired to have a Conference with him; which was held at Dr. *Veene*'s House, carried on in a regular and scholarlike Manner, and was afterwards reduced to Writing and published by *Limborch*; though he was not so happy as to overcome the Jew's Prejudices, who at the End of the Conference declared it his Opinion, "that every one ought "to continue in his own Religion, since it "was much easier to attack another Man's "than to prove ones own."

But Mr. *Limborch* had better Success in a Conference of the like Nature, the Occasion of which was this. A young Gentlewoman of *Amsterdam*, who had an Inclination to learn

Hebrew

Hebrew of a Jew, was by him gradually seduced to Judaism. Her Mother, as soon as she came to know it, was much concerned at it, and employed several Divines to bring her back to Christianity; but in vain were their Arguments and Persuasions. Dr. Veene happening to be sent for to visit a sick Person in the House, and hearing the Mother speak with great Concern of this Affair, mentioned Mr. Limborch's Dispute with Orobio, which made her very desirous Mr. Limborch might discourse with her Daughter, in hopes he would be able to reduce her by his Arguments to the Christian Religion again. Mr. Limborch accordingly came to her in April 1694, and proceeding with her in the same Method he had used with Orobio, in a few Conferences recovered her to a better Judgment, and intirely convinced her of the Truth of Christianity, to the great Satisfaction of her Mother and herself. —— The next Work Mr. Limborch published was *Historia Inquisitionis, &c.* in 1 Vol. Folio. Amsterdam 1692. It has been translated into English by Mr. Samuel Chandler, and printed in Quarto, who by Way of Introduction prefixed a curious History of the Rise and Progress of Persecution, as well amongst the Heathens as Christians. His last Work was *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum & in Epistolas ad Romanos & Hebreos.* Fol. Rotterdam 1711.

Mr.

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Mr. Limborch had two Brothers, *Rembert* elder than himself, and *Simon* younger. *Rembert* was born in 1692, and applied himself to the Study of the Law in which he acquired great Reputation and was raised by his Merit to be Advocate Fiscal of *Holland*. *Simon* was also bred to the Law not without deservedly raising a Character by it.

Lately Publish'd,

THE genuine Works of *Flavius Josephus*, the Jewish Historian. Translated from the Original Greek, according to *Havercamp*'s accurate Edition. Containing twenty Books of the Jewish Antiquities, with the Appendix, or Life of *Josephus*, written by himself: Seven Books of the Jewish War: And two Books against *Apion*. Illustrated with new Plans and Descriptions of the Tabernacle of *Moses*; and of the Temple of *Solomon*, *Zorobabel*, *Herod*, and *Ezekiel*; and with correct Maps of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*. Together with proper Notes, Observations, Contents, Parallel Texts of Scripture, five compleat Indexes, and the true Chronology of the several Histories adjusted in the Margin.

To this Book are prefixed eight Dissertations, *viz.* I. The Testimonies of *Josephus* vindicated. II. The Copy of the Old Testament made use of by *Josephus*, proved to be that which was collected by *Nehemiah*. III. Concerning God's Command to *Abraham*, to offer up *Isaac* his Son for a Sacrifice. IV. A large Enquiry into the true Chronology of *Josephus*. V. An Extract out of *Josephus*'s Exhortation to the Greeks, concerning *Hades*, and the Resurrection of the Dead. VI. Proofs that this Exhortation is genuine; and was no other than a Homily of *Josephus*'s, when he was Bishop of *Jerusalem*. VII. A Demonstration that *Tacitus*, the Roman Historian, took his History of the Jews out of *Josephus*. VIII. A Dissertation of *Cellarius*'s against *Harduin*; in Vindication of *Josephus*'s History of the Family of *Herod* from Coins. Translated into English. With an Account of the Jewish Coins, Weights, and Measures. By *William Whiston*, M. A. Some time Professor of the Mathematics in the University of Cambridge. Price of the small Paper 1*l.* 10*s.* Middle 1*l.* 16*s.* and Royal Paper 2*l.* 10*s.* Bound and Letter'd.

Mr. LIM-

Mr. LIMBORCH's
P R E F A C E.

EVERY Truth ought to be dear and valuable to Man, more especially that which points out to him the Way to eternal happiness: For though to be ignorant of other Truths may be detrimental, and deprive us of many Advantages in this Life, yet they cannot bar our Way to that which is the only true and substantial Good: Whereas our Ignorance of this leaves the Soul destitute of Hope, and robs it of all comfortable Assurances of its own happiness. Now as it is agreed by all Christians, that Christianity alone is that salutary Truth; and consequently, that such a settled Belief of that Religion, as will naturally produce a sincere Obedience to the Precepts of it, is the only Means whereby we can obtain eternal Salvation, and rely on God for the certainty of it; it is a Duty highly incumbent on all that profess the Name of Christ, to support the Truth of his Doctrine by the most convincing Arguments,

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gements, and to rescue it from those Objections which are levelled at it, that they who have not yet embraced it may clearly see its divine Original, and thereby be brought over to the firm Belief of it,

There are various Opposers of the Truth of Christianity dispersed over the World; but in our Country they are confined to two Classes, Jews, and Atheists, or Deists. The Jews deny the Truth of the Gospel, and refuse to own Jesus Christ for their Saviour: Nevertheless they acknowledge the true God to be the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and make the divine Law of Moses, the Rule of their Faith and Practice; whereas the Atheists and Deists, (whom I join together, not because I look upon them both to signify really one and the same Sect, but because Deism, generally speaking, differs very little from Atheism, and those who profess the former, do most commonly favour the latter in their Hearts;) these either believe in no God at all, or else resolve him into a natural and necessary Agent, and so in effect entirely subvert all Religion: Besides, as they reject all Revelation, they have no certain Rule of Life to go by, or if they have, it is only the Light of Nature which they hold to be the most perfect Guide.

It is the Duty of a Christian to defend the Truth of his Religion, against both Adversaries, as well to convince Gainsayers of its Divinity, as to confirm the Minds of those, who by the Grace of God have already embraced the Truth, and to keep

keep them steadfast in the Faith, that they be not lead away by the Cavils and false Reasonings, of its Opposers. It was from this Motive that I engaged in a friendly Conference with a learned Jew, which encreasing by degrees into a regular Series of Argumentation, I resolved to make it publick; and as I was preparing it for the Press, I happened luckily to light upon a Manuscript which had long lain by me unobserved, wherein revealed Religion, in general, as well Mosaic as Christian was attacked; a Confutation of which, I thought, might prove both acceptable and useful to Christianity in general.

The Author of this Piece, as appears at the End of the Manuscript, was Gabriel (afterwards amongst the Jews called Uriel) Acosta: What gave occasion to his writing it, himself sufficiently declares; and as to the Title, (A Representation of human Life) it is what he prefixed to it himself. He seems to have finished it a few Days before his Death, and after he had determined to put an End to his Life: For burning with a desire of being revenged on his Brother (others say his Cousin) by whom he thought himself injured, he came to a Resolution to shoot him, and then himself. Accordingly, as this Relation was going by his House one Day, he levelled a Pistol at him; but missing Fire, and seeing himself discovered, he immediately clapt too the Door, and taking up another Pistol which lay ready for that Purpose, he shot himself, and died in a terrible Manner. In the House of the deceased this Manuscript was

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found; a Copy of it was communicated by a very eminent Citizen to my Great Uncle Simon Episcopius, amongst whose Papers I found it. As to the Time of this Transaction, the History itself affords us some Light; for that little Treatise of the Physician, that it makes mention of, De Immortalitate Animarum, was published at Amsterdam by Ravesteinius, in the Year of the World 5383, according to the Jewish Calculation which answers to 1623 of the Christian Æra. Now if we take into the Account, both the times of his living separate from the Jews, we may thence form a pretty near Judgment of the Time of this History.

It is not my Design in this Place to remark any Thing concerning the Excommunication or Sentence, which the Jews passed on this Writer, but only to examine the Arguments by which he opposes the Doctrines of revealed Religion in general, and those of the Christian in particular, and to shew how insufficient they are to disprove the Truth of it. But I desire it may be observed, I would not have any one think, that, because I have annexed the Confutation of this Piece to my friendly Conference with a learned Jew, I have an equal esteem for my Adversaries, or intend to cast any Odium on my learned Correspondent Orobious, by representing him as an Infidel of the same Class with this Uriel Acosta. This never entered into my Thoughts; for besides that the latter is no less an Enemy to the Mosaic than the Christian Revelation, I know very well that my Friend

Orobious

Orobius holds him in utter Detestation as the vilest of Men, and would think it a Disgrace to have any Resemblance to such a Reprobate. This my Confutation therefore of Acosta's Objections is a Defence of the Truth, not only of the Gospel, but also of the Law of Moses, to which if my learned Jewish Correspondent can add any Thing that may more clearly demonstrate the Divinity of the latter, he shall be entitled to my Thanks, as I hope I shall not be thought undeserving, for what I have said in Defence of it against the unjust Accusations of our common Adversary. The whole of the Matter is, in short this: As I had prepared for the Publick an Answer to those Arguments of the Jew, which he manages with so much cunning and learning against the Christian Religion; I took this opportunity of confuting the Cavils of this unhappy Man, with which he attacks our Christian Faith though from a very different Principle, in order to vindicate the Religion of Christ from some frivolous Objections, and to make its Truth and divine Original appear with greater Evidence and Clearness.

URIEL

URIEL ACOSTA
HIS
ACCOUNT
Of his own
L I F E.

I WAS born in *Portugal*, in a City of the same Name, but commonly called *Oporto*: My Parents were of the Nobility, and originally descended from those *Jews* who were constrained to embrace the *Christian* Religion in that Kingdom: My Father was a true *Christian* and a Man of strict Honour and Integrity. I had a genteel Education at home, Servants always to command and a managed *Spanish* Gennet to perfect myself in that Exercise of the Great Horse in which my Father was completely skilled, and I endeavoured to follow his Steps to the utmost. At length being grown up, and as well accomplished in the liberal Arts as young Gentlemen

Gentlemen generally are, I applied myself to the Study of the Law. As to my Genius and Disposition, I was naturally very pious and compassionate, insomuch that I could not hear the Story of any Person's Misfortunes without melting into Tears; and had such an innate Sense of Modesty, that I dreaded nothing so much as to suffer Disgrace: Not that I had the least Cowardice in my Temper, or was free from Resentment when a just Occasion offered; for which Reason I always had an Aversion to that haughty and insolent Race of Men, who are apt to despise and trample upon others, and therefore took all Opportunities to defend the Oppressed, and to make their Cause my own.

By Religion has my Life been made a Scene of incredible Sufferings. I was educated, according to the Custom of that Country, in the *Papish* Religion; and when I was but a young Man, the Dread of eternal Damnation made me desirous to keep all its Doctrines with the utmost exactness. I employed my leisure Time in reading the Gospel, and other spiritual Books, ran through *Breviaries of the Confessors*, and the more Time I bestowed upon them, the greater Difficulties still rose upon me: Which by degrees threw me into such inextricable Perplexities, Doubts and Difficulties, as overwhelmed me with Grief and Melancholy.

It

It seemed to me a Thing impossible by confessing my Sins (after the Custom of the *Roman Church*) to obtain by virtue thereof a plenary Absolution, and to have fulfilled all the Things that were required; and this consequently made me despair of Salvation, as it was to be obtained only by such particular Rules. But as it was a very difficult Thing to shake off at once a Religion which I had been educated in from my Infancy, and which by a long implicit Faith had taken deep Root, I began, when I was about twenty Years old, to question with myself, whether or no it was not possible for those Things which were related of another Life, to be Forgeries, and whether a Belief of them were consistent with Reason; forasmuch as my Reason did perpetually suggest to me Things that were directly contrary. Under this Doubt I continued some time; and at last came to this settled Persuasion, that Salvation was not to be obtained in the Way that I was in. During this time, I applied myself to the Study of the Law, and, when I was in my twenty-fifth Year, an Opportunity offered by which I obtained an ecclesiastical Benefice, *viz.* the Dignity of Treasurer in the Collegiate Church.

Not being able to find that Satisfaction I wanted, in the *Romish Church*, and being desirous to attach myself to one, knowing also there was a very great Dispute betwixt the *Christians* and *Jews*, I went through the Books of

of *Moses* and the Prophets, wherein I found some Things not a little contradictory to the Doctrines of the *New Testament*; and there seemed to be the less Difficulty in believing those Things which were revealed by God himself: Besides the *Old Testament* was assented to both by *Jews* and *Christians*, whereas the New was believed by Christians only. Hence I was induced to become a Convert to the Law of *Moses*, and as he declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself, being called by him to that Office, or rather constrained to accept it (so easily are the Ignorant imposed on,) I thought it my Duty to make the Law the Rule of my Obedience. Having entered upon this Resolution, and finding it was unsafe to profess this Religion in that Country, I began to think of changing my Habitation and leaving my native Home. In order to this, I immediately resigned my ecclesiastical Benefice in favour of another, unbiassed either by the Profits or Honour of it, which are two prevailing Motives with the People of our Nation: I also left a handsome House situated in the best Part of the City, that my Father had built. Which having done, my Mother, Brothers, and myself embarked on Board a Ship, though at a very great hazard (it not being lawful for those that are descended from the *Jews*, to depart the Kingdom without the King's special License.) I must acquaint the Reader, that, from a Principle

ciple of natural Affection, I had communicated to them my Sentiments on the Falsity of our Religion, though such a Discovery might have proved fatal to me. So dangerous a Thing is it in that Country to speak freely on this Subject, though to the dearest Friends. Having finished our Voyage, and being arrived at *Amsterdam*, where we found the *Jews* professing their Religion with great freedom, as the Law directs them, we immediately fulfilled the Precept concerning Circumcision.

I had not been there many Days, before I observed, that the Customs and Ordinances of the modern *Jews* were very different from those commanded by *Moses*: Now if the Law was to be strictly observed, according to the Letter, as it expressly declares, it must be very unjustifiable in the *Jewish Doctors* to add to it Inventions of a quite contrary Nature. This provoked me to oppose them openly; nay, I looked upon it as doing God service to defend the Law with freedom against such Innovations. The modern *Jewish Rabbins*, like their Ancestors, are an obstinate and perverse race of Men, strenuous advocates for the odious Sect of the *Pharisees* and their Institutions, not without a view to gain, and, as is justly imputed to them, vainly fond of the uppermost Seats in the Synagogue, and Greetings in the Market. Men of this Character could not bear that I should differ from them, though in the most minute Points, insisting upon my following

following their Steps exactly in every Thing, or else threatening to exclude me from their Synagogue, and to pass full Sentence of the greater Excommunication upon me *: But as it was unworthy of him, who had so lately left his native Country, and been content to forego many other temporal Advantages for Liberty of Conscience, to be overaw'd and forced to submit to Men, who had no right to such a Power; besides, I thought it both sinful and beneath a Man to be a Slave in things pertaining to Conscience; therefore I resolved rather to suffer the worst they could inflict rather than recant: Accordingly they excommunicated me from their Society, insomuch that my own Brothers, who before took me for their teacher, in spiritual Things, durst not take any Notice of me as they passed by me in the Street for fear of the *Rabbins*.

This Situation of Affairs put me upon writing a Treatise in defence of myself, and to prove plainly out of the Law of *Moses*, the Vanity and Invalidity of the Traditions and Ordinances of the *Pharisees*, and their repugnancy to that Law. After I had begun this

* There are two Degrees of Excommunication among the Jews, the lesser, which only excludes the Person from some particular Society or Congregation till he repents, which he is allowed to do in thirty Days; and if he does not, then is pronounced the Greater, which affects his Goods, confiscates them to sacred Uses, and deprives him of any Dealings with or Support from his nearest Relations, as well as subjects him to many other grievous Penalties. *Vide Abendana's Jewish Polity.*

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Work, (for I think myself obliged to relate every Thing plainly and circumstantially) it happened that I entirely agreed with the Opinion of those, who confine the Rewards and Punishments proposed in the *Old Testament* to this Life only, and seem to be little concerned about a future State, or the immortality of the Soul; being induced to embrace this Opinion by the following Argument among others, because the Law of *Moses* is quite silent as to the two last Points, and only proposes temporal Rewards and Punishments to the Observers and Transgressors thereof. This was no small Matter of Triumph to my Adversaries, to find that I had entertained such Opinions, thinking they had thereby gained the Christians to their Party, who by their Faith in the Gospel, which expressly mentions eternal Rewards and Punishments, do believe and maintain the Immortality of the Soul. It was with this view of rendering me odious to the Christians, and to silence me entirely, that, before my Book was put to the Press, they employed a certain Physician to publish a Treatise, * entitled, *Of the Immortality of the Soul*, in which the Doctor inveighed bitterly against me as one who defended *Epicurus's Principles*, and who by de-

* This Treatise was published in the Year of the World 5383, according to the Jewish Calculation of Time, which answers to the Year of the Christian Era 1623.

N. B. The Author was, I believe, *Menasseh ben Israel.*

nying

nying the Immortality of the Soul, did in a Manner dispute the Being of a God: Whereas at that very Time I had conceived but an ill Opinion of *Epicurus*; and being prejudiced by the unfair Relations of other People, without hearing what he had to say for himself, did not scruple to censure him with great freedom: But having heard the Sentiments of some impartial lovers of Truth, concerning him and his Doctrine, I have found Reason to change mine, and to be sorry for the Injustice I did him then, in pronouncing so great a Man to be both absurd and mad, when at this very time I am so far from being a competent Judge of his Opinions, that I am an utter stranger to his Works. The next Step they took was to set their Children upon me in the Streets, who insulted me in a Body as I walked along, abusing and railing at me, crying out, There goes a Heretick, there goes an Apostate. At other times, they assembled together before my Doors, flinging Stones at the Windows, and doing every thing they could to disturb and annoy me, so that I could not live at quiet in my own House. After the Doctor's Book I have mentioned was published, immediately I set about my own Defence, and wrote an Answer to it, in which I opposed the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality with all the Strength I was able, glancing by the Way at the Deviations of the *Pharisees* from the Mosaic Institution. No sooner had this appeared

appeared in Print, than the Senators and Rulers of the *Jews* agreed to lay an Information against me before the publick Magistrate, setting forth that I had published a Book to disprove the Immortality of the Soul, and that with a view to subvert, not only the *Jewish* but also the Christian Religion. Upon this Information I was apprehended and sent to Prison, from whence, after a confinement of eight or ten Days, I was discharged upon giving Security, for I was fined by the Magistrate, in the Penalty of three hundred Florins, besides the forfeiture of my Books lately published.

Some time after this, as Age and Experience are apt to occasion new discoveries to the Mind of Man, and consequently to alter his Judgment of Things; (let me here declare my Mind freely, for what should hinder a Man from speaking the Truth without reserve, who is just going to make his Exit, and to leave behind him a sad, though true Example of human Misery?) it was some time after this, I say, that I began to question with myself, whether the Law of *Moses* ought to be accounted the Law of God, seeing there were many Arguments which seemed to persuade, or rather determine the contrary. At last I came to be fully of Opinion, that it was nothing but a human Invention, like many other Systems in the World, and that *Moses* was not the Writer; for it contained many Things contrary

contrary to the Law of Nature: And God, who was the Author of that Law, could not contradict himself, which he must have done, had he given to Men a Rule of Obedience contrary to that first Law. Having thus determined this Point, I began to reason with myself in the following Manner, (I wish I had never entertained such a Thought!) What can it profit me to spend all my Days in this melancholy State, separated from the Society of this People and their Elders, especially as I am a Stranger in this Country, destitute of any Acquaintance with its Inhabitants, or even Knowledge in its Language? How much better will it be for me to return to their Communion, and conform to their Ways, in compliance with the Proverb, which directs us at *Rome to do as they do at Rome!* These Considerations prevailed with me to return to their Society; accordingly I made a formal Recantation, and subscribed such Articles as they were pleased to impose upon me, after having lived fifteen Years in a State of Separation from them. I must observe, that a certain Cousin of mine helped to mediate this Reconciliation betwixt us.

A few Days after this I was accused by a Lad my Nephew, whom I kept in my House, in relation to Meats, the Manner of dressing them, and other Ceremonies of the like Nature, by which it appeared that I did not conform to the Customs of the Jews. Upon this Information

Information, new and cruel Proceedings were commenced against me; for my Cousin, whom I mentioned before as a Sort of Mediator betwixt us, thinking that this behaviour of mine reflected dishonour on his Mediation, and being besides a proud, resentive, bold Fellow, and very hasty, declared himself openly my inveterate Enemy, and seducing all my Brothers over to his Side, left nothing unessayed that might ruin me in my Reputation and Fortune; and by consequence that might deprive me of Life itself. He prevented a Marriage which I was then just upon the Point of Concluding; for I had lost my Wife lately. He was likewise the Occasion that one of my Brothers detained from me my Effects which he had in his Hands, and also put a stop to the Dealings which subsisted between us, by which means I suffered a prodigious detriment in my Affairs; in a Word, he was a most implacable Enemy to my Reputation, Fortune and Life. Besides this domestick War, (if I may so call it) another of a more publick Nature, was carried on against me by the Rabbins, and the People who began to persecute me with fresh hatred, behaving with such insolence to me as raised my just Abhorrence and Detestation of them. At this time a new Affair broke out, as follows. I happened one Day to be in Company with two Men who came from *London* to *Amsterdam*, the one a *Spaniard*, the other an *Italian*, both

both Christians, and not so much as related to the *Jews* by descent, who taking an opportunity to declare to me their necessitous Condition, asked my Advice touching their becoming Proselytes to Judaism: Whereupon I dissuaded them from any such Purpose, advising them rather to bear the Inconveniences of their present Condition, than to subject themselves to so heavy a Yoke, the Grievousness of which they were unacquainted with, cautioning them at the same Time, not to make the least mention to the *Jews* of what had passed between us, which they faithfully promised me: But these perfidious Wretches, induced by the Hopes of filthy Lucre instead of returning me Thanks went and disclosed all to my dear Friends the *Pharisees*: Upon this the Rulers of the Synagogue met, the Rabbins were fired with Rage and Resentment, and the insolent Rabble cried out with one Voice, crucify him. In a Word, I was cited to appear before the *Sanhedrim*, where the Articles of my Charge were read with as solemn and awful Voice as though I had been upon my tryal for Life; and then it was determined, that if I was really a *Jew*, I ought to be resigned and submit to their Sentence, otherwise I must be excommunicated again. Very just and equitable judges, who assume to yourselves the Power of Condemnation and Punishment, but if I appeal to your Authority for Protection against Oppression and Wrong, then indeed

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you pretend that you have not Authority to interfere in those Matters, and are only Servants and Subjects to the Civil Power. Of what validity then is your Judgment that I should obey it? Then was read out of a little Book my Sentence, which was "that I must make " my entrance into the Synagogue dressed in " a mourning Vestment, holding a black " Wax taper in my Hand, and there to read " distinctly before the whole Congregation a " Form of Recantation penned by them, in " which they had described in black and odious " Colours, the great Enormity of my Crimes: " Then I was to submit to be whipt in the " same publick Manner, with a Scourge made " of leather Thongs: After that to prostrate " myself at the Door of the Synagogue, that " they might all pass over me, and more- " over to fast certain Days." I had no sooner heard my Sentence, but I was fired with Indignation and a just Resentment. However containing my Passion as well as I could, I only answered, that I could not prevail with myself to undergo such a severe Sentence. When I had given in my Answer, they consulted together, and proceeded to a second Excommunication of me; but not content with this, many of them spit upon me as they passed by me in the Streets, and encouraged their Children to do the same: In short, the only Reason they did not stone me, was because they wanted Power. This persecution lasted the Space of seven Years, during which time
should

should I relate all that I suffered, it would appear incredible; for two Parties violently persecuted me, one the whole *Jewish Body*, the other my Relations, who sought for their revenge in my Disgrace; nor would they be satisfied, till they got me into their own Power and Jurisdiction, saying among themselves, he is stubborn, he will do nothing till he is forc'd, and therefore ought to be compelled. If I was sick, no body would attend me; if I laboured under any other Misfortune, it was a Matter of Triumph and Joy to them; if I proposed any one of their own Body to be a Judge between us, the Proposal was rejected; and as to disputing things of this Nature before a publick Magistrate, which I began to do, I found it very tedious and difficult, for judicial Proceedings are at least both dilatory and expensive *. During these my Troubles they would often exhort me to submission, saying, We are all your Fathers, and therefore you need not fear that we shall act an unfair or unkind Part towards you; only say, that you are ready to perform whatsoever we enjoyn you, and leave the rest to us, and all shall be made easie. This was the very Point in dispute, and I was also sensible how disgraceful

* If they were so in *Holland* a hundred Years ago, when this Author wrote, I fear they are no better now, too many in *England* can witness the Truth of this Assertion, where it is generally more profitable to give up ones right to many Advantages, than to contest it with a stubborn Adversary, who can produce Arguments from the Law, not to be found in any System of Ethics sacred or profane.

it was to surrender at Discretion, and depend on their Mercy; yet being desirous to put an end to this long Affair, after much Reluctance, I prevailed with myself to submit to their own Terms, and make Trial of their Honour: For thus I argued with myself; if they deal dishonourably by me, they will stand convicted by their own Proceedings, and make evident their implacable Disposition towards me, and how little Trust is to be reposed in them: And at length this execrable and detested People, did plainly shew what their Religion and Principles are, by treating Men of Honour and Character in as scandalous a Manner, as if they had been the vilest Slaves upon Earth: In a Word, I said to them, behold I depend upon your Mercy, and am ready to undergo whatsoever you are pleased to impose on me! Now let every Man of Candour and humanity attend to my Relation, and judge of the Sentence, which a particular set of People, and under a foreign Jurisdiction, passed upon an innocent Man.

I made my entrance into the Synagogue, which was filled with Men and Women out of curiosity to be Spectators. And at the Time appointed I went up into the Desk, which stood in the middle of it, and with a distinct Voice read over the Form of Confession, which they had drawn up for me, *viz.* that I deserved to die a thousand Deaths for the Crimes and Misdemeanors I had committed, such as prophanation of the Sabbath, Breach of

of my religious Vow, &c. which I had so far violated, as to dissuade others from being Converts to Judaism; to atone for which Impieties I submitted to their Sentence, and was ready to undergo whatever they were pleased to lay upon me, promising not to be guilty of the like Crimes for the future. When I had finished my Lesson, I came down from the Desk, when the chief Priest came up to me, and whispering in my Ear, bid me go to a certain corner of the Synagogue, which having done the Door-keeper bid me to strip; accordingly I stripped myself naked down to the Waste, tied a Napkin about my Head, pulled off my Shoes, and holding up my Arms above my Head, clasped a sort of Pillar in my Hands, to which the Door-keeper tied them with a Band. Having thus prepared myself for my Punishment, the Virger came to me, and with a Scourge of leather Thongs gave me nine and thirty Stripes, according to the Custom of the Jews, (it being a Precept of their Law, that the Number of Stripes shall not exceed forty.) For these very stupulous and religious Gentlemen, take due Care not to offend by doing too much. During the Time of my whipping they sang a Psalm. This correction being over, I was ordered to sit down on the Ground, and then the Doctor came to me and absolved me from my Excommunication; so now the Gate of Heaven, which was doubly lock'd and bar'd against me before, was flung open all on a sudden. O the ridiculous Notions

and

and Conceits of Mortals ! After this I put on my Cloaths, and went to the Door of the Synagogue, where I prostrated myself, the Door-keeper holding up my Head, whilst all both old and young passed over me, stepping with one Foot on the lower Part of my Legs, and behaving with ridiculous and foolish Gestures, more like Monkeys than human Creatures. When they had all done, I got up, and being washed and made clean by the Man who stood by me for that Purpose, I went home. Now let no body say that they did not do me Honour, for if they scourged me, yet they lamented over me and stroaked my Head. O shameless race of Men ! O detested Fathers ! You from whom I had nothing dishonourable to fear ! You, who said, far be it from us to use you indecently. Now let any one who has heard my Story, judge how decent a Spectacle it was to see an old Man, a Person of no mean Rank, and who was moreover naturally exceedingly modest, stript before a numerous Congregation of Men, Women, and Children, and scourged by order of his Judges, and those, such as rather deserved the Name of abject Slaves. Let him imagine the Confusion and Anguish, such a one must suffer, by being obliged to lye at the Feet of his bitterest Enemies, and be trampled on by those Persons who had already loaded him with Injuries and Insults : Farther let him think, he sees his own Brothers (O monstrous, inhuman and shameful Treatment,) who were educated in the same House with him, joining in an unnatural Confederacy with

with his Persecutors, unmindful of that natural Affection with which I always loved them, and which was so peculiar to me ; and regardless of the many good Offices I had done them, requiting all my tenderness and kindness with shameful Injuries and Disgrace.

My detested Persecutors said in defence of themselves, that they only made me a just Example of Punishment, to deter others of their Communion from open Rebellion against their Ordinances, and from writing against their Doctors. Most wicked Wretches and Fathers of all Untruth ! with how much more Justice could I have made you a publick Example of Punishment, to deter you from practising the like Abuses on Men who are sincere lovers of Truth, haters of Fraud, and indifferently the Friends of all Mankind, of whom you are the common Enemies, esteeming all others but as the Beasts and Scum of the Earth, whilst you arrogantly extol yourselves with vain Encomiums, as the only Favourites of Heaven : Whereas you have really nothing to boast of, unless you think it praise worthy to live as Vagabonds, banished from the Society of Men, despised and hated by all for those ridiculous and absurd Customs, by which you distinguish yourselves from the rest of the World : If you rely on a greater Simplicity of Manners and Integrity of Life than other Men, your Pretences are very false, who visibly fall short of many others in these Respects. I affirm therefore, that if I had not wanted

Power

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Power; I might with just Cause have revenged myself of this contemptible Crew, for the great Injuries and Mischiefs they did me, and which rendered Life itself a Burden; for who that has any regard to Reputation, could bear to lead an ignominious Life? for (as a certain Heathen very well observed) it is the Duty of every Man either to live with Honour, or to die bravely. My Cause is as far superior to theirs, as Truth is more excellent than Falsehood: For whereas they are Advocates for a Fraud, that they may make a Prey and Slaves of Men; I contend nobly in the Cause of Truth, and assert the natural Rights of Mankind, whom it becomes to live suitably to the Dignity of their Nature, free from the Burden of Superstitions and vain Ceremonies. I confess it would have been more for my advantage, to have been silent from the first, and to have acquiesced under things just as I had found them: This is a more politick way for Men, who would live free from the Insolence of the Rabble, and the Oppression of tyrannical Governors; for every one that is intent on self Interest, is industrious to suppress Truth, to lay Traps for the Ignorant and Unwary, and to trample Justice under Foot: But after I was unwarily drawn into, and deceived by a false Religion, and had gone so far as to enter the Lists with these Champions, I thought it more honourable to die bravely, than to have those mortifying Reflections which must necessarily attend a base Submission. It was a common

common Argument with them, to appeal to their majority in number, objecting to me, that as I was alone in the opposition, I ought to submit to them. And indeed, Gentlemen, you are so far in the right, that it is the Safety and Interest of a single Person to submit to numbers, for fear of falling a Sacrifice to their Power; but because it is safe, it does not therefore follow it is right, ingloriously to quit the Field to plunderers and robbers; you must therefore allow at least, that it is a glorious Virtue to make the best stand we are able against the haughty Invader, lest Success and a tame Submission, encourage him in his Insolence and Usurpation. It is indeed the Part of a truly worthy, a good and generous Man, to be meek and gentle with those of the same Disposition; but to put on the Simplicity of the Lamb, when we are to engage with the Fierceness of the Lion, is foolish and absurd. If to die in our Country's Cause is deservedly ranked amongst the most glorious actions, because our Country is a Part of ourselves, ought it not to be esteemed equally glorious, to do the same in defence of our Reputation and Honour? Which are properly and peculiarly ours, and without which we cannot live as becomes Men; unless, as you seem to think; to wallow in the Dirt of filthy Lucre can denominate us such. But say these vile Scoffers, trusting in the Strength of their Number more than that of their Cause; what availeth your contending with us? What can you do against so many! I confess it, and la-

ment it as my great Misfortune, that I am overpowered by your Multitude: It is owing to this, and your bitter Reflections on me, that my Heart burns with Resentment and Indignation, and makes me think it unlawfull to use fair play towards such wicked, arrogant and abandoned Wretches. All I can say is, I want the Power of Revenge.

I know that these Adversaries, in order to blacken my Reputation and traduce me before the illiterate Vulgar, would frequently say, this Man, is neither *Jew*, *Christian*, nor *Mahometan*, he believes no Religion at all: But take heed, blind *Pharisees*, what you say, for though your Hearts be full of Malice and Cunning, yet being without Light your Tongues betray you. Suppose I was a *Christian*, what then would you say? It is plain you would call me an Idolater, and say, that the true God from whom I had revolted, would pass Sentence of Condemnation on me, together with *Jesus of Nazareth* the Teacher of the *Christians*. If I was a *Mahometan*, we all know what Names you would honour me with then; so that it is impossible for me to escape your Slander, and no refuge would be left me, but that of falling down at your Feet, and embracing your abominable and carnal Institutions. Now pray tell me, if you know of any other Religion beside those already mentioned, the two last of which you hold to be false, and therefore call them Deviations from the true one. But methinks I hear you allow one more Religion to be truly and properly

properly such, and by virtue of which Men may please God ; for, say you, if all Nations, the *Jews* only excepted (for by the way, you must always distinguish yourselves from the common Herd of Mankind) keep the seven Commandments which you affirm *Noah* to have observed, and others before *Abraham's* Time, this is sufficient for their Salvation : By your own Confession then, there is one other Religion that I may trust in, though I am descended from the *Jews*. Now let me beseech you, that I may be permitted to take my chance among the Uncircumcised ; or if I cannot obtain this Request, I shall take the Benefit of that Privilege of my own accord. O thou blind *Pharisee*, who, unmindful of that primary Law which was from the Beginning, and will be so to the End of Things, only makest mention of other Laws of a latter Date, all of which thou condemnest except thy own ; but of that, others will judge whether you will or no, according to the Rule of right Reason, which is the true standard of that Law of Nature, which you utterly disregard and would fain bury in oblivion, that you may lay a grievous and heavy Yoke on other Men, and divest them of their Reason and Sense. As I have touched upon this Point, I shall dwell a little on the Subject, and take notice of the excellency of this primary Law. Granting then that this Law is the common Rule of Action to all Men, and suitable to them as they are such ; it does certainly link

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them together in the Ties of mutual Affection, and is an utter stranger to those Divisions, which occasion hatred and animosity among Men, and are the greatest Evils that infest Society. It is that which teaches us the Art of living well, which distinguishes between right and wrong, and points out what is decent and indecent: Whatever is excellent in the Law of *Moses*, or any other Institution, is perfectly contained in the Law of Nature, from which if we deviate never so little, Contentions and Divisions are the natural Consequences; but if we err widely from it, who can describe the Distraction, Confusion, and terrible Disasters that must result from such a Defection? What are the most useful Precepts in the Law of *Moses* or any other Religion, relating to human Society, and conduced to a friendly intercourse with one another? They are chiefly those of honouring our Parents, and not to invade the property of others, whether it be in their Lives, their Characters or Fortunes: Now there is nothing in these which is not dictated by the Law of Nature, and does not entirely agree with that Rule of right Reason: We naturally love our Children, and Children their Parents, Brother is affectionate to Brother, and one Friend to another: We cannot help desiring, that every thing belonging to us should be preserved safe, and consequently, hate those who disturb our quiet or endeavour to deceive us. From hence it necessarily follows, that we ought not

not to do those things which we condemn in others; for if we condemn those who deprive us of our property, the Sentence turns upon ourselves if we invade another Man's. We have here in one view, every thing that is material and essential in any other Law: As to the Distinction of Meats, let us leave that to the Physicians, who will best instruct us, which are salutary and which hurtful. With regard to other Ceremonials, Rites and Ordinances, such as Sacrifices, Tythes, and all that fraudulent Trade, contrived to support the Lazy with the Profits of the Industrious, this is the very Cause of our Complaint, these our Misfortunes, that we are misled and deceived in these Points by designing Men. All true *Christians* must acknowledge what I have advanced, and are much to be commended where they have banished these Impositions, only retaining those things which assist us in leading a good moral Life; for we cannot be said to live well, when we observe many vain Ceremonies, but only when we live like rational Creatures. But it may be said, that the Law of *Moses* or the Gospel do contain a more noble and perfect System of Duty, than we are taught by the Light of Nature; one Instance is, that Precept which enjoyns us to love our Enemies; to which I answer, that if we once deviate from the Light of Nature, and think to substitute something more perfect in its Place, Discord and Disputes immediately ensue. For what signifies laying Commands

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mands on me, which I have not in my Power to obey? for if it is naturally impossible for me to love my Enemy, what effect can such a Law produce, but dissatisfaction and uneasiness of Mind? But if it appears not to be impossible to do good to Enemies (which we may, and not love them, for Man is naturally prone to Humanity and Compassion,) we cannot from hence deny, but in this Sense the Law of Nature is absolutely perfect.

Now let us consider the Inconveniences that arise from deviating very far from the Law of Nature. We before asserted, that there is a natural Affection between Parents and Children, between Brothers and Friends: Now any positive Law, let *Moses* or who will be the Author of it, which commands a Father to kill or betray his Son, a Brother his Brother, the Wife her Husband, or one Friend another, for the Sake of Religion, does entirely dissolve and break that universal Tie, and enjoins Men that, which, if they do perform, will render them notorious Offenders against the Law of Nature, which abhors such Practices. But why need I instance in these Crimes, when Men have abandoned themselves to such a Degree of Infatuation, as to sacrifice their own Children by way of burnt offering, to those Idols which they ignorantly worshipped, so void were they of all humanity and natural Affection. How much happier would it have been, if Men had kept within those Bounds which Nature had set, and not given themselves up to such

such abominable Inventions! Why need I mention the Horrors and Anxieties, with which some superstitious Men have filled the Minds of their fellow Creatures, and which had they observed only the Dictates of Nature, they would have been entirely free from. How many live in the State of Despair? How many die Martyrs to various Opinions, that have been instilled into them by others? How many devote themselves to a miserable Life, tormenting their Bodies, giving up themselves to Solitude and Sadness, perpetually disquieting their Minds with dismal Apprehensions, and making themselves wretched here, for fear of being so hereafter? To these and innumerable other Evils, does false Religion, invented by weak and wicked Men, subject us poor Mortals. I speak by woeful Experience, for I am one of the Deluded, who have been fatally deceived by such Impostors, and ruined by Credulity. But it is said again, if there be no other Law than that of Nature, and if Men have not a firm Belief of a future State, and are not aw'd by the Dread of eternal Punishment, what will be sufficient to restrain them from doing Evil continually? These are Inventions of your own, (which there is too much Reason to apprehend) are with a view to your own Advantage, at least with the same Design, that People tell Stories to Children of Spirits and such like, to frighten them into a compliance with their Wills, and to keep them in awe. These Stratagems have the desired effect, whilst they

continue

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continue Children, but when they come to the Use of their Reason they laugh at the Cheat, and no longer stand in fear of such Tales: Just so ridiculous are your Frauds, and only fit to impose upon Children and Fools, whereas they who see into them, deride both the Cheats and the Authors. I will not here examine the Lawfulness of such Frauds, seeing you who are the Contrivers of them do allow in your own Law, that evil is not to be done that good may come of it; unless you think it no evil, to invent Lies to the prejudice of others in their most important Concerns, and to frighten weak People out of their Senses: Whereas, had you the least spark of true Religion or Awe in yourselves, you must be under the greatest Dread of future Punishment, for having introduced so much mischief into the World; for having excited so much Discord and Division among Men, and for all your impious and execrable Doctrines, whereby you are the Occasion of setting Parents and Children against each other.

Give me leave here to propose the following Question: If these groundless fears which you instill into the Minds of Men, are contrived on purpose to restrain that natural Malignity which is inherent in them, and to keep within the Bounds of their Duty, those who would otherwise lead immoral Lives; must not you at the same Time reflect that yourselves are Men of like Passions with them, naturally averse to what is good, prone to evil,

evil, injurious, without Compassion or Mercy? But I see every one of you filled with Rage at so insolent a Question, and justifying his own Conduct: What, are we not all pious, and merciful, and strict Adherers to Truth and Justice? I answer, what you thus boastingly say of yourselves is notoriously false; your Accusation of all other Men is scandalously unjust, (whose natural Propensity to evil, you pretend to correct with your fictitious Terrors.) Impiously you reflect on the Majesty and Goodness of God, whom you represent as a Tyrant and cruel Destroyer; and cast a severe Reproach on human Nature, in supposing it to be subjected to so deplorable and wretched a Fate, as if the common Calamities of Life that happen to Man, were not sufficient for his Portion of Misery. But granting the natural Corruption of Man is very great, which I readily allow, (yourselves being a sufficient Proof of it; for otherwise you could not be capable of such scandalous Forgeries;) yet, upon this Supposition, you ought to look out for a more effectual Remedy, that may be sufficient to expell this general Disorder without introducing a worse in its Place: And to lay aside those Impositions, which are only fit to frighten Children and simple Folk; but if the Disorder is incurable, then cease your vain delusive Pretences, and no longer, like impudent Quacks, promise Men that Health which you are not able to give them; but be content with establishing among your-

selves just and reasonable Laws, providing Rewards for the Good, and suitable Punishments for the Bad ; defending the Cause of the Injured against the Violence of the Oppressor, that there be no complaining that Justice is not executed in the Earth, and that there is none to deliver the Weak out of the Hand of the Strong. In a Word, if Men would follow the Dictates of right Reason, and live according to the Laws which Nature dictates to them, they would all mutually love and compassionate one another ; every one would then contribute his utmost to the Relief of his Neighbour under any Affliction, or at least, no Man would injure another, for that would be acting contrary to human Nature. Indeed many of the Evils that happen in Life do arise from hence, that Men have invented Laws directly repugnant to those of Nature ; and thereby give occasion for one Man to injure and persecute another. On the other hand, many deceitfully circumvent the Unwary by their extraordinary Pretences to Piety, using Religion as a Cloak to make a Prey of such as are superstitiously inclined : These may aptly be compared to a Thief in the Night, who treacherously attacks us when we are off our Guard, and do not suspect any Danger : Yet these are the Men who are continually vaunting, I am a *Jew*, or I am a *Christian*, doubt not my Integrity ? Rely upon me, I will not deceive you. Infamous Wretches ! He who pretends to be neither of these and

and only calls himself a Man, is far preferable to you; for if you will not believe him, you may stand upon your Guard: But who can defend himself against you, Hypocrites, who, under the Mask of Sanctity, like the Thief before mentioned, come in by Stealth and murder us in our Sleep.

There is one thing beyond many others, that I wonder at, and very surprizing it is; how the *Pharisees*, living in a *Christian* Country, come to enjoy so much Liberty, as to judicial Power and Authority! For I may safely affirm, that if *Jesus of Nazareth*, whom the *Christians* worship, was to preach at this very time at *Amsterdam*, and it pleased the *Pharisees* to scourge him (as their Forefathers did) for opposing and condemning their Traditions, and Hypocrify, they might do it with Freedom and Impunity. This is certainly just Matter of Reproach, and what ought not to be tolerated in a free City, which professes to protect Men in the peaceable Enjoyment of their Liberty, and yet does not skreen them from the Insolence and injurious Treatment of the *Pharisees*; and therefore, where a Man cannot be allowed an Advocate to defend his Cause, or a Judge to punish the Injuries done him, it is not to be wondered at, if he takes all Opportunities to defend and revenge himself.

I have here given the true History of my Life, having fairly laid before you the Part and Character, I acted on the vain Stage of

this World, during the Course of a most variable and unsettled Life. Now, Readers, judge impartially, and deliver your Opinion on what I have written, like brave and honest Men, with Freedom and Truth; and if there is any Thing in my Story which moves your Compassion, let it teach you to pity me, and to lament the miserable Condition of Mankind, in which yourselves are equal Sharers. That it may be known who was the Author of this, let me observe, that, whilst I lived in *Portugal* a *Christian*, I was called *Gabriel Acosta*; but when I came over to the *Jews*, (which I wish I never had done) my Name, with a little Variation, was chang'd into *Uriel*.

A Short

A Short

CONFUTATION

OF

ACOSTA's

OBJECTIONS against all revealed Religion. By PHILIP à LIMBORCH.

THE foregoing Piece consists of two Parts. In the former the Author gives us a tragical Account of his own Life, which it is beside our Purpose to say any Thing of: The other contains a bitter Invective against the *Jews*, of whose injurious and cruel Treatment he grievously complains; and therein intersperses some Objections against all revealed Religion, odiously representing every thing that is acknowledged as such, to be mere Forgery and Fraud; and likewise takes Occasion from hence directly to throw some of his Malignity against the *Christian* Religion in particular. His private Quarrel with the *Jews*, does no Way concern us; therefore I shall not enquire into the Validity of their Excommunication of him, nor whether

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he deservedly incurred that Sentence; much less whether their Scourging him in the Synagogue, as related, was a just and lawful Proceeding. I will only observe by the Way, that he undeservedly reproaches the Magistracy of *Amsterdam*, for not protecting People against the Injuries of the *Pharisees*; nor is his own Example any Proof of the Truth of such an Accusation; for, without ever applying to the Magistrate for Protection, he voluntarily gave himself up into the Hands of his most inveterate Enemies, the *Jews*, and submitted to whatever Sentence they should please to pass upon him, which, indeed, he could not reasonably expect would be a very mild one; and therefore there is not the least Foundation in Justice for his charging his Sufferings on the Neglect or Treachery of the Magistrate, which of his own Accord he underwent without making them known, or applying to the Magistrate for his Protection; which if he had done, he would have found in him a sure Refuge from the Violence of the *Jews*: But it is very wicked in him to charge that on the Magistrate as a Crime, which was occasioned entirely by his own Impiety, Folly and Neglect: Besides, he is a most wicked Slanderer for saying (on Purpose to cast an *Odium* on the Magistrates of *Amsterdam*) the following Words: *I may safely affirm, that, if Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Christians so much reverence, was to preach now at Amsterdam, and the Pharisees had a mind to scourge him again, for his accusing*

accusing them of Hypocrisy, and opposing their Traditions, they might freely do it.

There cannot be a more scandalous Invective against that Venerable Body, who are known Defenders of the Honour of *Christ*; and tho' they grant the *Jews* a free Toleration in their City, yet all know that they are not allowed to exercise any Jurisdiction, or judicial Authority, much less any Power in Criminal Causes; so far is it from being true, that they would permit any such Proceedings against *Christ* our Saviour. Fie upon such infamous Calumnies!

All that I shall take under Consideration in this Place is, what he has advanced (towards the End of his Tract) to the Disparagement of the *Christian* Religion: The Sum of which is this, "That the Law of Nature is the common Rule of Action to all Men, and is innate to the human Mind; and by this Men are united together in mutual Love; that if we deviate from this Law, or add any Thing to it, Discord and Diffension must immediately ensue; that it is this Law which delivers all the Precepts necessary to a good and happy Life; and that whatever is said to be added to it by Revelation, is either contained in the Law of Nature, or is impracticable by us:" To which he adds (as the Conclusion) a Catalogue of sundry Evils, which, he says, must necessarily follow a Departure from this Law. Each of these Objections shall be distinctly considered.

It is so far true, that the Law of Nature is a common Rule of Action to all Men, and impressed

impressed upon their Minds, forasmuch as the first Principles of that Law are discoverable by their own Light, and deducible from Reason: But his Inference from this Position is intirely false, *viz.* That whatever is superadded to that Law, must necessarily produce Discord and Dissension; for these Additions are either contrary to the Law of Nature, or perfective of it, *i. e.* they are such Truths as were not discoverable by the Light of Nature, but being made known by Revelation, appear to be highly agreeable to it, and tend to carry it to a greater Degree of Perfection. Of the first Sort there can be no revealed Truths; for God, who is the Author of Nature, cannot contradict himself, which would be the Case, was he to command any Thing by Revelation which the Law of Nature forbids, or prohibit any Thing which it enjoins: Nor can any Thing of this Kind be justly charged upon revealed Religion. Of the latter Sort are all the Duties and Propositions of revealed Religion; for tho' they are such as the Law of Nature does not of itself point out to us, yet it no where condemns or opposes them, but confirms and approves them, as exactly agreeable to its Principles and Dictates.

I shall illustrate what has been said, by the very Example which *Acosta* brings from the Precept of loving our Enemies. The Law of Nature does not enjoin us to love an Enemy, or declare it unlawful to return his Hatred, or to revenge an Injury; but rather seems to allow

allow a Kind of Right in Vengeance, and to return like for like, by doing to others as they have done by us. This appears not to be repugnant to Justice; nor can *Acosta* deny this, who full of Indignation and Revenge, cries out, that it is *lawful to return the Wicked his Impiety, the Proud his Stubborness and Obstinacy*; and only laments his Want of Power to revenge himself: By which he shews it to be his Belief, that the Law of Nature not only permits us to hate our Enemies, and to take a proportionable Revenge of those that have grievously injur'd us, but in some Cases even requires it of us. And at the End of his Tract he justifies this Kind of Behaviour in the following Words, "When any Person is destitute of a Protector, it is not to be wonder'd at, if he endeavours to defend himself, and to return the Injuries he has received."

But here he is under a manifest Error; for the Law of Nature is so far from condemning those who refrain from revenging the Injuries done them, that it nowhere disapproves of their Conduct who recompence Evil with Good, and even pray for their Persecutors; but, on the other Hand, applauds those who do so, as Instances of a truly generous and great Mind.

To this *Acosta* replies, "What doth it signify, if I am commanded to do what I cannot possibly perform, no Good can arise

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" from thence; on the contrary, an Uneasiness
" of Mind at being obliged to love an En-
"emy, which, in the Nature of it, is impos-
"sible: But if it be possible by the Instinct of
" Nature to do Good to an Enemy, (which
" may be without any Love) because, gene-
" rally speaking, Man is prone to Tenderness
" and Compassion, then we cannot deny but
" this Perfection is in the Law of Nature."

The Force of this Argument lies here; whatever Things are said to be added to the Law of Nature by Revelation, are either impossible to be observed, or not; if they are impossible to be observed, in vain are they imposed on us; if they are possible, then they are comprehended in the Law of Nature. A very little Attention will discover the Absurdity of this Reasoning. To do Good to our Enemies is not a Thing prohibited by the Law of Nature, seeing it approves of such an Act as a noble and generous Virtue; but it does not, as we have observed before, bind this upon us as a Duty, nor condemn a contrary Behaviour; for whatever falls short of the Perfection of Virtue, does not therefore commence a Vice, and deserve to be censured as criminal.

But here the *Christian Religion* is more perfect than the Law of Nature, seeing it takes away that Defect which the other allows of, and forbids it under a severe Penalty, as contrary to the Rule of Charity; and what the latter admits

admits to be a Virtue but does not insist on as a necessary Duty, the *former* enjoins to be observed by all Men, and makes the Neglect of it to be a very great Sin; so that under the Christian Dispensation, it is not only unlawful to revenge Injuries, but an indispensable Duty to do good to our Enemies, to love them, and to pray for them. Thus we see, that tho' it is by Nature possible to do Good to our Enemies, yet that *Christianity* which enjoins this Beneficence, contains something more perfect than is to be found in the Law of Nature; nor can *Acosta*, with any Colour of Reason, object to Religion for going beyond the Law of Nature, in commanding that as a necessary Duty, which the latter has not done: For since the Law of Nature greatly approves what we are speaking of, as a truly noble and generous Act, it is evident this Precept of our Religion doth tend to the greater Perfection of Man, and thereby advances the Law of Nature to a higher Degree of Excellence; for every Man who professes *Christianity*, and expects to obtain the Rewards it promises, must observe this Precept.

But *Acosta* seems to think that these Things are naturally impossible to be observed by Man, at least the *Love of our Enemies*; for he adds, that we may do Good to our Enemies without loving them: From which we may conclude, that the Law of Nature does not command us to love our Enemies, and consequently that the Religion which does

command this, is more perfect than the other. And this is the Christian Religion, which not only commands us to love our Enemies, but also requires that our Love of them be sincere, and that in the good Offices we do them, we have Regard chiefly to the Good of their Souls. This is a clear Argument of the superior Perfection of Christianity, which thus commands us to prefer the Salvation of our inveterate Enemy to any Considerations of Self-Love or Interest.

But *Acosta* asks, *To what End or Purpose am I commanded to do Impossibilities?* I answer, What seems not possible by the Law of Nature, yet becomes so by Virtue of the *Christian* Religion! I can indeed easily believe that this seemed impossible to *Acosta*, who, burning with Resentment on Account of the injurious Treatment he had met with from the *Jews*, and disbelieving a future Estate of Rewards and Punishments, plac'd all his Happiness in the Accomplishment of his Revenge. But we must not conclude, that what appears impossible to such a Man as this, must seem so to a *Christian*, supported by the Hopes of eternal Happiness, seeing that the latter is fully perswaded this will be the sure Reward of those who love their Enemies, and that to those who act contrary, nothing remains but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment; therefore what before seemed impossible by the Light of Nature as to loving our Enemies, now appears highly agreeable to it, when we consider, that by checking this

this natural Propensity to Hatred and Revenge, we give a Proof of our Obedience to God, and by such an Act of Self-denial become intitled to his Favour, and the Reward of eternal Life *. Whatever Sweetness there may be in Revenge, it is not to be compared with the greatness of our Reward, which does more than make Amends for any Difficulties that may attend the forgiving of Injuries. Besides, it is intirely agreeable to the Law of Nature and right Reason, that of two Advantages we should chuse the greater; and tho' the less may have its Charms, yet we can easily prevail with ourselves easily to forego it, when it stands in Competition with a greater, especially if the Difference between them be considerable: But no greater Difference can be, than betwixt a transient, momentary Happiness, and that which is solid and eternal. The Law of Nature does not permit us to prefer a lesser to a greater Good, nor does it alter the Case tho' the lesser be present, and the greater at a Distance; for tho' we are affected more strongly with Objects that are present, than those which are remote and future, yet Faith, which is the Substance of Things hoped for, represents Things future to the View of our Minds as tho' they were present, and can easily remove our Prejudice, and by making us thoroughly persuaded, that those

* To this Argument we may add, that our very Enemies do in some Measure naturally become the Objects of our Love, when we consider them as instrumental (tho' undesignedly) in procuring or enlarging our future Happiness.

Things

Things which are now at a great Distance will most certainly one Time or other be present to us ; by such a Representation, it gives them the same Weight with us, as if they were really present. * Let us suppose that some Prince had promised *Acosta* a Deliverance from all his Troubles, a Protection against his Persecutors, and to place him in the Affluence of all the Enjoyments this World can afford, upon Condition that he would lay aside his Hatred and Revenge against his Enemies, and would love them, and do all the good Offices to them in his Power ; but if he harboured any Resentment or Malice against them, should threaten him with the severest Torments, which should end only by a lingering and painful Death : Supposing this to be the Case, would not the Dread of so severe a Punishment, and the Prospect of so happy a Condition have reconciled him to love his Enemies, however difficult a Task this might seem to him, whilst uninfluenced by any Hope of Reward, or Fear of Punishment. I can easily believe, that however his Mind might be inflamed with Anger and Revenge, such Motives as these would get the Victory over those Passions : Now it is expressly declared in the *Christian* Religion, that those who do Good to their Enemies shall obtain eternal Happiness, to which no temporal Pleasure can

* The Evidence we have from Reason, if we consider it attentively, is at least equal to that we receive from our Senses, which are as capable of being deceived in judging of Things present to them, as Reason can be in Things past or future.

possibly

possibly be compared ; but those who hate and persecute them, shall be tormented to such a Degree, as no Punishment in this World can equal. How then does the Law of Nature condemn and judge impossible a Precept, which tends to the highest Perfection of human Nature, and has also the Sanction of the greatest Rewards and Punishments to enforce it ?

But to this *Acosta* says, *These are all Frauds and the Impositions of designing Men*; and he is so far from allowing any future State of Rewards and Punishments, that he asserts Death puts an entire End to our Being. It is beyond the Design of this small Tract to enter upon a Series of Arguments on the Subject of Revelation ; I only therefore assert, that allowing the Truth of the Gospel History, (which in my Conference with *Orobius* the Jew I have sufficiently proved and defended against all his Objections) we have the most convincing Arguments for the certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; for we have not only therein the express Promise of another Life, but God raised up *Jesus Christ* (who was the first Preacher of this Doctrine) the third Day from the Dead, in Confirmation of this Promise; shewed him frequently to his Disciples after he was risen; and after he had conversed with them for the Space of forty Days, did in the Sight of the twelve Apostles, receive him up into Heaven. God might indeed by his Sovereign Authority

Authority, have commanded us to believe that we shall rise again from the Dead to Life eternal; but in Compassion to the Weakness of our Understanding, and knowing how difficult it is for a Man to believe that after he is dead and turned into Dust, he shall rise again with the same Body to live for ever, he has condescended to give us an Example of it in his Son *Christ Jesus*, and by this most certain Pledge, to confirm and strengthen our Belief, that *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, we may be as fully persuaded that we shall rise again, as we are that he is already risen: And so much the more, as our Saviour himself, when he was required by the *Jews* to give a Signal of his Divine Mission, did more than once appeal to his Resurrection the third Day, as a clear and undeniable Proof of it; and since the Event did exactly verify his Prediction, and prove his Divine Mission, what Pretence can remain, even to Infidelity itself, to doubt the Certainty of his Promise? Can any one believe that the God of Truth, who tenderly loveth all Mankind, would by a miraculous Act of his Power give Credit and Authority to an Impostor? Who can entertain so impious a Thought of the Divine Purity and Holiness? For what would this be but to make Error unavoidable, and to induce all sincere Lovers of Truth to believe a Falshood, when they saw the Author of that Fraud honoured by the Supreme Being with such incontestable Credentials? Far be it from

from any Man who is in his Senses, to suspect such a Thing of Divine Goodness. Thus we see, that there cannot be the least Pretence to doubt of Rewards and Punishments after this Life, unless we dispute the Truth of the whole Gospel History, which, I think, has been established by such solid Proofs, as will abundantly convince every unprejudic'd Person.

Acosta undertakes in the next Place, to invalidate an Argument brought to support the Belief of future Rewards and Punishments, which he states thus: *If there be only the Law of Nature for Men to walk by, and they are not kept in Awe by the Belief of a future State of Punishment, what can restrain them within the Bounds of this Duty?* As he has stated this Argument very unfairly, I think myself obliged to give its full Force, by setting it in a true Light, viz. So great is the Depravity of human Nature, so strong the Bias of its Passions, that the Law of Nature, or human Reason, is not of itself sufficient to restrain it; the Supreme Being therefore has pleased, in order to prevent the Overflowing of Ungodliness, to check us by his Paternal Care, and not only to restore the Law of Nature, which by the Degeneracy of Mankind was very much defac'd, but also to advance it to the highest Degree of Perfection, and to excite our Obedience to it, by the Promise of eternal Happiness, and the Dread of eternal Death. Now it does not follow from this

I Argument,

Argument, that if there be no State of Retribution after this Life, there can be nothing which may keep Men from perpetually doing Evil; for we know that in many Cases the Fear of the Magistrate will be a Check upon evil Doers, and deter Men from the Commission of publick Crimes; and also that the Law of Nature has provided a Curb for many irregular Appetites: But what we infer is, that these Restraints are not *always* sufficient to keep the Passions within Bounds, especially when they are powerfully acted upon by agreeable Objects, and thereby fall Victims to their present Delight: For we are all by Nature desirous of Pleasure, and abhor Pain: Reason does constantly dictate, that we should ever practice what is good, and refrain from every Thing that is evil; from hence it happens that when a good Action is attended with Pain, or a base one with present Pleasure, there arises a Struggle betwixt Reason and Passion, the former preferring what is virtuous to what is delightful, whilst the latter, regardless of Consequences, dissuades us from every Action which is link'd with present Pain. But as the Pleasure or Pain which accompanies the Objects of Sense are present, and make quicker Impressions upon us than the Reflections of Reason; and as the Pleasure which attends upon virtuous Actions, and the Pain which follows those of a contrary Nature, are at a Distance from us, and are never considered by a great many: The former, because

cause *present*, are generally preferred to the latter. By this Means our Passions too often overcome our Reason in the Contest, especially when they are sensibly affected by present Pleasure or present Pain.

As the Law of Nature therefore is insufficient of itself to stop the Growth of Evil, and to restrain the Passions of Mankind, God has been pleased to strengthen it with the Addition of Revelation, which by more powerful Motives, *viz.* the Promise of eternal Happiness, and the Threatning of future Misery, might check the Impetuosity of human Nature, and prevail with Men to prefer their Duty to sensual Pleasures: And this is so far from being repugnant to right Reason, that herein Revelation serves as a powerful Motive to those Things which Reason dictates and approves of.

But *Acosta* has represented this Argument as a Deceit contriv'd by designing Men, who endeavour to excuse the Fraud, by pretending the Necessity of it, as if otherwise there was no Tie strong enough to keep Men within their Duty: By this Means he has perverted an Argument, which not only affords Support to the Truth of Religion in general, but also vindicates it from that particular Objection, *viz.* *That it contains nothing perfecter than the Law of Nature*; and instead of so good an Argument, substitutes a ridiculous Piece of Cunning, which he makes no better than a Pretence for an Imposture.

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And therefore all the Outcry he makes about the Folly and Iniquity of such a fraudulent Scheme, is intirely beside the Purpose; for he ought to have shewn, that the Gospel Account of future Rewards and Punishments, was nothing but the Invention of crafty Men. But as he has not done this; as no Man can do it; and as the contrary is evidently démonstrated, all he has said is foreign to the Question, and not worthy of any further Notice.

What he adds concerning our *representing the Deity as a cruel, unmerciful Punisher of Men*, is not only weak, but impious. That those Sins and Iniquities which Men obstinately persist in deserve Punishment, is what *Acosta* himself allows, and strongly urges the Truth of his Proposition, being highly offended that the *Jews*, whom he reprobates for their Crimes, should escape with Impunity. It is therefore (by his own Confession) an Act of Justice to punish Vice, and reward Virtue, according to their respective Degrees; and if so, he cannot deny the absolute Right of such an Administration to belong to the Supreme Being. The Argument runs thus: What Reason demonstrates to be agreeable to Divine Justice, cannot be called an Act of Cruelty; but Reason demonstrates it to be agreeable to Divine Justice, that good Men should be rewarded, and bad Men punished; therefore to call God a *cruel and unmerciful Punisher of Men* for chastising Wickedness, is irrational, impious

impious and blasphemous; especially when we are assured from his Attributes, that he will proportion the Punishment to the Nature and Degree of the Crime. * The same Argument which establishes God's Right of Punishing, does also prove a State of future Rewards and Punishments: For as we often-times not only see Piety unrewarded, and Vice unpunished here, but even good Men suffering by the Tyranny of the Wicked, whilst the latter enjoy Power, Prosperity, and an Affluence of the good Things of this World; the Nature of the Divine Justice requires, that there be a State after this wherein good Men may be rewarded, and bad Men punished, that both may receive the proper Recompence of their Works. This is evidently agreeable to the Law of Nature or right Reason.

But *Acosta* argues thus: "Any positive Law, whether of *Moses*, or any other, dis-solves the Tie of natural Affection which is between Parents and Children, and other Relations, when it commands a Father, Brother, Wife, Son, or Friend to betray, or kill each other on Account of Religion: For such a Law orders that, which is beyond the Power of Men to obey; or if they do obey, it is doing what is contrary to Nature, which abhors such Actions."

* From hence we may infer, Mr. *Limborch* was against the absolute Eternity of Hell Torments.

I see nothing in this that can be any Objection to the Christian Religion; seeing it every where recommends Love and Benevolence towards all Men, even our Enemies, nay enjoins it as a Duty upon us, without which we cannot be *Christ's Disciples*, or hope for the Favour of God. Our Religion encourages and exhorts its Followers, to bear with Patience the worst that the Rage or Malice of wicked Men and Unbelievers can inflict; and is so far from permitting us to use Violence against those that differ from us in Belief, that it commands us to pray for our very Persecutors; it enjoins us indeed to propagate Religion with rational Arguments, Meekness, Long-suffering and Kindness; but no where permits us to make Converts by Fire and Sword. But if here he alludes to those cruel and bloody Laws, which are used in *Spain* and *Portugal* against the *Jews*, and all other Dissentients from the Church of *Rome*; as these are diametrically opposite to the Laws of the Gospel, instead of inferring from thence that *Christianity* is false, or repugnant to the Law of Nature, he ought to have prov'd the Unwarrantableness of those Laws from the Gospel, to have convicted those that made and execute them, of a Breach of the Divine Command, and of the *Christian* Law of Charity, and to have shewn that they are unworthy of the Name of *Christians*, whose Behaviour and Morals are so directly contrary to the Spirit of

of that Religion they profess. Therefore this Objection is of no Force or Weight against the Gospel.

But *Acosta* seems here to point rather at that Precept of the Law of *Moses* in *Deut.* xiii. 6, &c. where God gives the following Command : *If thy Brother, the Son of thy Mother, or thy Son, or thy Daughter, or the Wife of thy Bosom, or thy Friend which is as thine own Soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other Gods (which thou hast not known, thou nor thy Fathers,) thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine Eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine Hand shall be first upon him to put him to Death, and afterwards the Hand of all the People; and thou shalt stone him with Stones that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage.* But in Order to shew that this Law doth not subvert the Law of Nature, - we must consider it in all its Circumstances : *First*, As it was a Law only to the *Israelites*. *Secondly*, As the Punishment therein denounced respected only that particular People; for God does not command, that a *Heathen* who endeavoured to seduce an *Israelite* to Idolatry should be put to Death, but only if a Brother, or any one among the

Jews

Jews should attempt such a Defection in one of the same Nation. *Thirdly*, The Circumstance of Time when this Law was given to the *Israelites*. The whole World had at that Time revolted from the Worship of the one true God to Idolatry; and as it pleased the Almighty to chuse the Posterity of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, out of which the Saviour of the World should spring, it was his Will that they should be separated from all other Nations of the Earth, and that his Worship should be kept pure amongst them, from whom afterwards (under the Reign of the *Messiah*, the Redeemer of Mankind) it should in a more perfect Manner be propagated over all the Nations of the World: And consequently the very Nature of this Dispensation and Scheme of Providence did require, that this People should be restrained from polluting themselves with the Idolatry of the *Heathens*, by the most severe Prohibitions and Threatnings. To these we may add a fourth Circumstance, *viz.* That God had a more peculiar Claim and Title to Sovereignty over this People, founded upon the many Instances of his Favour towards them, in freeing them from their Servitude in *Egypt*; in many miraculous Interpositions of his Power for their Deliverance and Preservation; and in those tremendous Manifestations of himself at the Delivery of the Law on Mount *Sinai*, where he gave such visible and unquestionable Tokens of his Divine Presence: All which Circumstances,

cumstances, rightly considered, do evince, that there is nothing in this Precept contrary to the Law of Nature; nay, it is the Voice of Reason, that God alone, the great Creator of all Things, is to be worshipped; that it is a most heinous Sin to rob him of that Honour which is only due to him, and to give it to Idols; and that he will assuredly revenge himself of all such Indignities offered to his Majesty. Nor does it imply any Repugnancy to right Reason, that God should make Choice of a particular People out of the whole corrupted Race of Mankind; and for Reasons agreeable and best known to his infinite Wisdom, separate them for a Season from all other People, and establish a purer Form of Divine Worship among them; or that he should enact strict Laws with the Sanction of severe Punishments, in order to deter this People from that Idolatry with which the whole World was then infected, and command, that whoever among them should endeavour to seduce another to the Worship of false Gods, should be put to Death, without any Regard to the Ties of Friendship or Blood. I say, it cannot be contradictory to the Law of Nature, that those who offer such an Insult as this to the Divine Majesty should be punished, especially as they stand indebted to God's Goodness for signal and frequent Blessings, and have been honoured by him with nearer Communications, and clearer Discoveries of his Will than the rest of Mankind: Under these Obligations, to transfer

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Divine Worship from the true God to Idols, argues the highest Ingratitude join'd to the greatest Impiety. That Subjects who defy the Authority of an earthly King, and become Traitors by revolting to his Enemies, should be severely punished, is agreeable to Reason and Justice; and ought not God to have the same Power over such as openly defy him, despise his Authority and Laws, and disgrace his holy Name, by paying that Worship, which is only due to him, to Idols and evil Spirits?

But now, since the Distinction subsisting betwixt the *Jews* and other Nations is taken away, and Men are equally invited, to attain the Knowledge of the true God thro' *Jesus Christ*, the Circumstances which then required that Severity ceased, and the *Mosaic* Law consequently became of no Effect, but gave Way to a new Dispensation full of Mildness and Charity, not restraining Men from Idolatry by the Dread of temporal Punishment, but gently leading them to the Knowledge and Worship of the the true God, by persuasive and rational Arguments, by Holiness of Life and Doctrine, and by the Evidence of Miracles, and where these Means prove ineffectual, commanding us to bear with Mens Obstinacy with all Meekness and Long-suffering; in short, a Dispensation to which nothing is more opposite, than Persecution and Death on Account of any Difference in Religion. It cannot therefore be objected to Christianity, that it contradicts the Law of Nature,

ture, and kindles Hatred and Division among Men, seeing the very End and Design of it is to promote universal Benevolence, and the Salvation of all Men. If then at any Time the Promulgation and Propagation of our Religion, has been attended with Strife and Animosity, with deadly Hatred and cruel Persecutions; this cannot be imputed to the Religion itself, which by gentle Methods invites Men to the Profession of it, and does not permit us to force it upon others: But it is to be imputed to the Tyranny and Wickedness of Men, who rejecting the Commands of the Gospel, and in Defiance to the Law of Nature, have set themselves to oppose all who differ from them in Opinion, with implacable Hatred, regardless of the Ties of Humanity, Friendship or Kindred: Therefore *Acosta's Arguments* are of no Force against *Revealed Religion* in general, much less the *Christian* in particular.

If then this unhappy Man, prompted by his Hatred to the *Jews*, and incensed at their ill Treatment of him, makes their Actions the Standard whereby he judges of all Religion, he is under a gross Delusion; for the Precepts of Religion are in nowise to be estimated by the Conduct of Men. At this Rate the Law of Nature, in whose Defence he appears so strenuous an Advocate, would be condemned, seeing many who acknowledge that to be the true and only Rule of Action, live in direct Opposition to its Laws, and consequently if

we make their Lives the Test whereby to judge of the Precepts of that Law, we must affirm that it enjoins Oppression, Uncharitableness, Revenge, and many other Crimes, because the Commission of these is frequent amongst Men, and the contrary Virtues seldom practised. If then he ought not to have determined of the Excellency of the *Mosaic* Law by the Behaviour of the *Jews*, much less ought he to have done so of the Christian Religion; nor because their Actions appeared contrary to the Law of Nature, ought he to condemn both the Law and the Gospel, as teaching Doctrine contrary to it: But, instead of this, he should have convinced the *Jews* of Transgression, by proving from the Law of *Moses*, that their Actions were not consistent with that, which they professed to be the Rule of their Duty. This was what he did presently after his Conversion to *Judaism*, upon finding that the Morals and Ordinances of the *Jews* did not agree with the *Mosaical* Precepts, but did not therefore believe that the Law itself was corrupt and debased; why then does he here raise an Objection both against the Law and the Gospel from the Corruption of their Professors, and not rather reprove and condemn their Morals from the Precepts of that holy Religion, of which their Lives shew them to be such unworthy Disciples? By such a Conduct he would have consulted the Good of his own Soul, have given a Check to such Practices as were contrary to the Law; and by an impartial and serious

rious Examination of the Doctrines and powerful Arguments which support the Christian Religion, might have become a sincere Convert to the Gospel : Thus he would have been led to acknowledge his Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, notwithstanding that great Reproach which is cast upon his Religion by the wicked Lives of its Professors; and by the Assistance of Divine Grace, thro' a firm and lively Faith in him, shewing forth itself in Charity and good Works, have work'd out his own Salvation. Now, that others may not be hindered embracing the Faith by Reason of the wicked Lives of Christians, it is the Duty of us all who profess the Sacred Name of *Christ*, to adorn our holy Religion with good and pious Lives, being particularly careful that we be not easily carried away from our own Stedfastness, by Diversity of Opinions on religious Subjects; and, above all, that we avoid a persecuting Spirit; but that we study to promote Peace and Unity in the Church, by bearing with each others Frailties, and by exercising those amiable Virtues, Meekness, Patience and Tenderness, diligently endeavouring to bring others over to the Religion of *Christ*; whilst we make it appear to all Men, that we do not only believe, that our Lord is the Prince of Peace, and his Church the Kingdom of Unity, but also that we are govern'd by the Spirit of Peace, and that our Practice is agreeable to our Profession.

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